

Embedding academic literacy in Health Science – critical interactions or clash of disciplines?

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Abstract

This paper discusses issues in embedding academic literacy in Health and Science units, especially in large Interprofessional Education (IPE) units. Academic literacy embedded into academic content is considered the most effective way of developing students' academic writing. However, teaching writing is commonly considered secondary to teaching content, and embedding initiatives might result in highlighting "institutional and social distance between staff perceived to be concerned with 'content' and those concerned with 'skills'" (Chanock et al., 2012, p. 1) rather than emphasising "equal division of intellectual labor" (Appadurai, 1986). Further, academics, usually coordinators and lecturers in these units/subjects, who are willing to collaborate with AALL specialists, are not the only ones teaching in these large units. Many casual tutors are employed to help facilitate student learning by delivering planned teaching and learning activities. They play a crucial role in students' engagement in their subject content, as well as their academic skills development. Unlike the unit coordinator, however, tutors may not be committed to the principle of embedding or feel confident to facilitate student learning by delivering planned teaching and learning activities including how to research, study and communicate discipline knowledge in a manner appropriate for university. Considering these differences, there may be variation in their level of engagement, which might also impact on how embedding takes place in that particular unit. A research project is being carried out to investigate both lecturers and tutors' perceptions of their role in the unit(s), and will further explore their commitment to as well as their need for professional development in embedding academic literacy.

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Project

To gain an understanding of academics, tutors'

- Investment in learning & teaching for the professional preparation of students
- Perception of their role
- Need for professional development

- **Catalysing Innovation in Learning & Teaching**

- Interprofessional education in Science & Health
- Data – Survey & focus groups

Invitation to 32 academics

- 19 (60%)
 - responded to survey
- 10 (33%)
 - focus groups

Points to consider

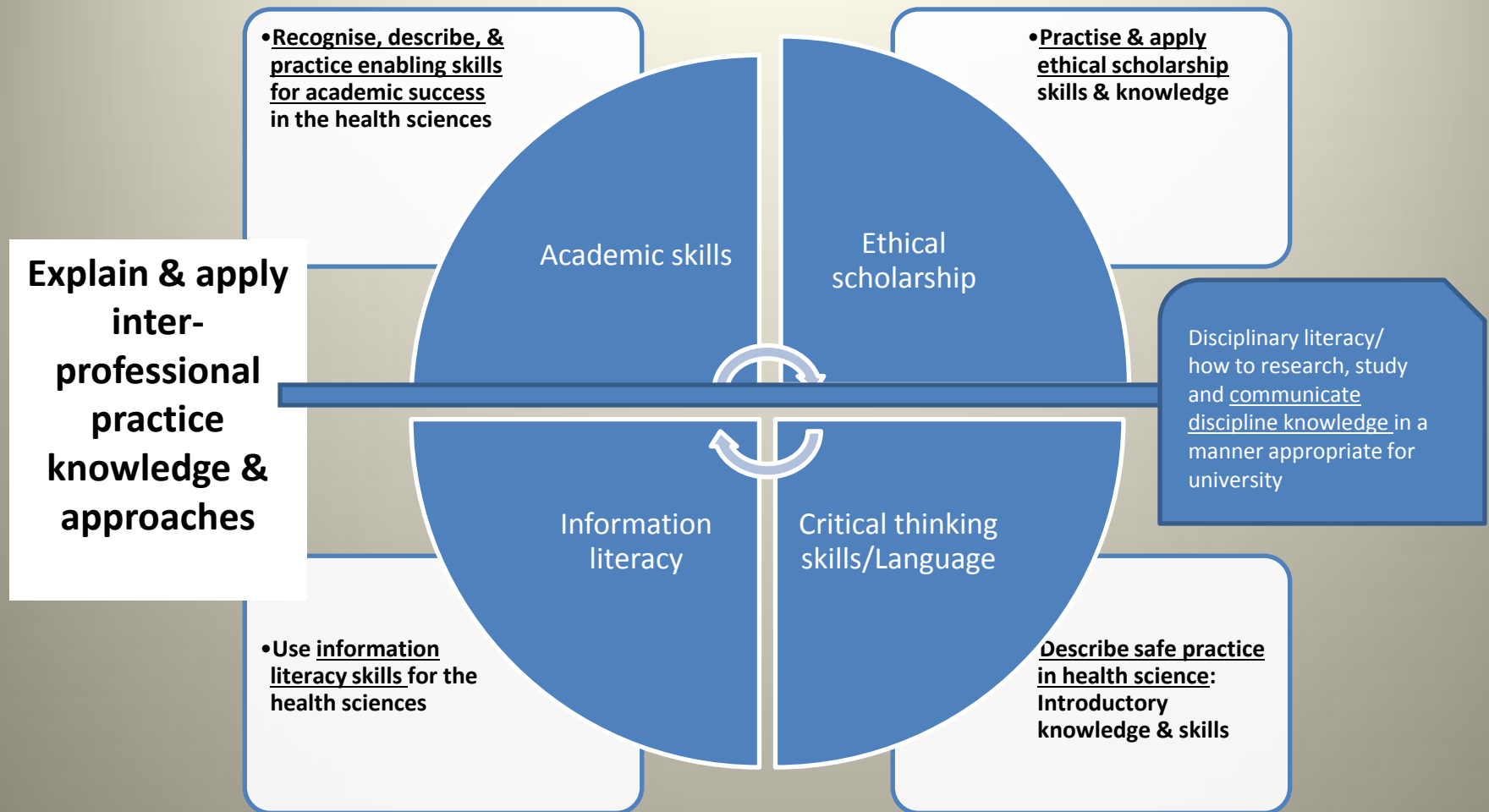
- *Interprofessional Education (IPE) in Health Science*
- *Academic literacy embedding*
- *Partners – AALLs & Discipline academics*
 - *Willing/converted coordinators and lecturers*
- *Casual tutors facilitate student learning by delivering planned teaching and learning activities*

Interprofessional Education (IPE)

- Interprofession = health-related professional compulsory learning from, with and about each other to improve collaboration and the quality of care
- (Health Science, Paramedicine, Health and Physical Education, Sports and Exercise Science, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Occupational Therapy, Podiatric Medicine, Physiotherapy, Health Services Management, Health Promotion and Therapeutic Recreation).
- large first year units

InterProfessional Knowledge, skills & Competencies

- Information literacy skills
- Critical thinking
- Communication
- Group work
- Language
- Evidence based practice
- ethical practice
- Research methods
- Health related terms
 - ICF concepts
 - person centred practice
- safe practice
- legal responsibilities & obligations



Shared? the twain shall meet...

Content vs skills

- Academics
- Teaching
- Resources
- Activities

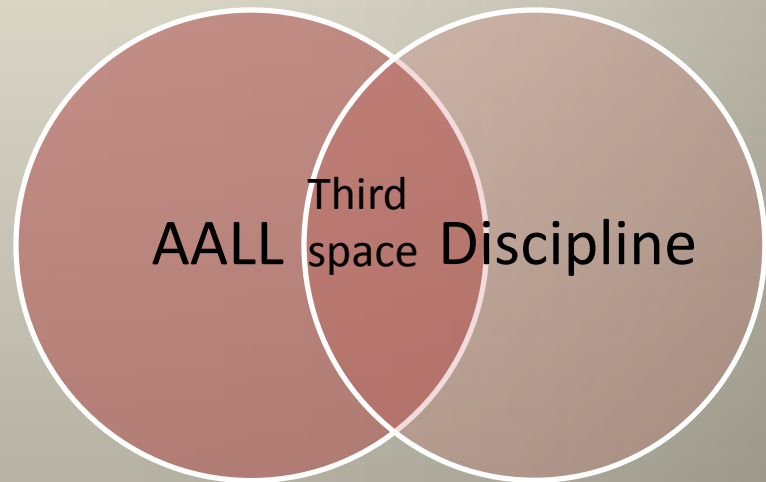
Third space- Embedding-

Shared space between

Academic Literacy &
English language

+

Discipline academics-
Lecturer & tutors



Another layer of skills vs content

The inter-professional team are like a subsidiary in Science some way, as if

- we are not real type, or that we are all social scientists,
- We don't really engage in high level research which influences our teaching,
- we kind of pull stuff from various places and put together
- We provide a watered down version of what they feel they would be able to provide

Exploration/Probes

- perceived facilitators and barriers to engagement with IPE students,
- sense of ownership and autonomy over the content and its delivery,
- investment in the unit outcomes, topics, activities, assessments,
- engagement in professional development or research in the units(s) content areas,
- Academic literacy development- Whose responsibility –

Agency – Development & freedom

- Capabilities

- Development

- Choice

- Value

- Opportunity

- Freedom

Agency

- Achievement

- Capability to
achieve

Academic writing whose responsibility?

- the assignment should help students develop their academic writing skills'. Agreed 87%
- 'tutorial activities should build students' academic skills'. Agreed 84%
- academic literacy needs to be taught by academic literacy advisers 48 % Agreed

Comments :

- barrier is that there is too much work to get through within a one hour tutorial.
- Each week the tutors had to skip parts of content or set them for homework.
- Staff need to look into this themselves.... No support from DAP's and Unit Coordinators provided.
- Staff should be provided support on teaching large Units with say 500 students or more with varying skill and interest levels in the unit
- there is not much interaction happening between the lecturers and the tutors; not very much. Not much interaction happening because with the foundations, it's a big
- While trying to mark somebody's English grammar and language. You think, "this should have been done in high school, well before high school. I shouldn't have to sit down and mark their English".
- It becomes a double whammy and you go, academic skills or lack of professional knowledge and whether they're not understanding what I'm teaching them!

Professional development

Teaching skills for inter-professional learning and teaching

- Online technology 69 %
- Developing students' academic literacy 50%
- teaching large groups 31%
- Providing feedback 12.5%

Agency- choices

- I found myself spending a lot of time giving very detailed feedback on academic literacy in a first year, first semester assignment.
- If the lecturer and tutor/s can provide examples that are specific to their degree/area of interest, I think they respond well to the unit content overall.
- I would like to explore strategies for ensuring that the differing needs of students are met.
- I think we put more emphasis on academic literacy, particularly in first year, as there are too many third year students submitting poor quality written work.
- Maybe in a tutorial where we show them, like you did for the workshop, samples of student work where we show them, “what do you think about it. you critique this”, and then we critique as a whole class. We allow them to critique; we give them time and then we critique as a whole class. Then we say, “this is how you could have done it to have a better score. If you think this is not good, why. What is wrong with it”.
- If I would be unit coordinator of a subject, I couldn't assume every tutor of mine would be able to do that, so there needs to be professional development or at least a guidance session

Points to consider

Development- opportunities- freedom

- What is the role of those who plan/ and those who implement /“teach” in embedding?
- Skills vs socialisation
- Academic agency dependence/role of professional development
- Capability model- Socialisation in Embedding academic literacy